

African American Historic Places in South Carolina

The following properties in South Carolina were listed in the National Register of Historic Places or have been recognized by the South Carolina Historical Marker program from July 2012-June 2013 and have important associations with African American history.

State Historic Preservation Office
South Carolina Department of Archives and History

HM = Historical Marker

NR = National Register of Historic Places

Aiken County

AIKEN GRADED SCHOOL HM

corner of Hampton Ave. & Kershaw St., Aiken

(Front) This park is the site of Aiken Graded School, a two-story brick school built 1924-25. It was built for black pupils in grades 1-7 and was one of almost 500 S.C. schools funded in part by the Julius Rosenwald Foundation 1917-1932. Black Aiken physician Dr. C.C. Johnson raised \$3,500 in the black community toward the total cost of \$33,500. Black brick mason Elliott Ball supervised the school's construction.

(Reverse) The school, described as "one of the best in the state" when it was being built, had ten classrooms, a library, and an auditorium seating 600. It opened in the fall of 1925, with principal W.D. Drake, nine teachers, and almost 300 students. The school, the only black elementary school in Aiken until new schools began to be built in 1954, closed in 1969. It was demolished in 1973.

Sponsored by the Aiken County Historical Society, 2013

Anderson County

Faith Cabin Library at Anderson Training School, Pendleton NR

The Faith Cabin Library at Anderson County Training School is significant for its role in African-American education and social history in South Carolina from ca. 1936, when it was built, to 1954, when Anderson County Training School closed with the construction of a new African-American "equalization school" nearby. It is also significant as one of only two remaining free-standing Faith Cabin Libraries extant of the thirty built in South Carolina between 1932 and 1943. The Faith Cabin Library at Anderson County Training School was a part of the larger Faith Cabin Library program created by Willie Lee Buffington, a white mill worker who later became a Methodist minister and college professor, that offered library services to rural African Americans in South Carolina. The segregation laws of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century barred African Americans from using other library facilities beyond what was offered in Columbia and Charleston. The black community of Pendleton and nearby rural communities of Anderson County were among the thirty communities fortunate to participate in the Faith Cabin Library program. Faith Cabin Libraries not only served the schools nearby but also served the larger African American communities in their area as well. By building free-standing libraries, the Faith Cabin Library movement provided access to library services for the community completely independent of school hours. During the transition of certain schools to community centers, these libraries remained open to provide access. The building is a one-room log cabin built with donated money and timber from the community.

<http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/anderson/S10817704022/index.htm>

Beaufort County

COMBAHEE RIVER RAID HM

at Steel Bridge Landing, U.S. Hwy. 17 N over the Combahee River at the Beaufort Co.-Colleton Co. line, Gardens Corner vicinity

(Front) On June 1-2, 1863, a Federal force consisting of elements of the 2nd S.C. Volunteer Infantry (an African-American unit) and the 3rd Rhode Island Artillery conducted a raid up the Confederate-held Combahee River. Col. James Montgomery led the expedition. Harriet Tubman, already famous for her work with the Underground Railroad, accompanied Montgomery on the raid.

FREEDOM ALONG THE COMBAHEE

(Reverse) Union gunboats landed 300 soldiers along the river, and one force came ashore here at Combahee Ferry. Soldiers took livestock and supplies and destroyed houses, barns, and rice at nearby plantations. More than 700 enslaved men, women, and children were taken to freedom in perhaps the largest emancipation event in wartime S.C. Some freedmen soon enlisted in the U.S. Army.

Sponsored by the South Carolina Department of Transportation, 2013

FIRST AFRICAN BAPTIST CHURCH HM

601 New St., Beaufort

(Front) This church, founded in 1865, grew out of an antebellum praise house for black members of the Baptist Church of Beaufort. During the Civil War, after the Federal occupation of the town, it hosted a school for freedmen. Rev. Arthur Waddell (1821-1895), its founding pastor, had come to S.C. from Savannah, Ga. In 1867 Rev. Waddell and two black ministers from Savannah formally organized this church.

(Reverse) In 1885 the congregation, with more than 900 members, built this “handsome and commodious” Carpenter Gothic church. Rev. Waddell continued to serve this church until he retired in 1894. At his death in 1895 First African Baptist was described as “one of the most aristocratic colored churches.” Robert Smalls (1839-1915), Civil War hero, state legislator, and U.S. Congressman, was its most prominent member.

Sponsored by the Beaufort County Historical Society, 2013

GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC HALL HM

706 Newcastle St., Beaufort

(Front) This building was built ca. 1896 by the David Hunter Post No. 9, Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.). The G.A.R., founded in 1866, was a fraternal society for veterans of the Union army and navy, with white and black posts. David Hunter Post was founded in 1888 by African-American veterans, many of them former slaves on Sea Island plantations who had been soldiers in the United States Colored Troops in the Civil War.

(Reverse) The post was named for Gen. David Hunter (1802-1886), who had organized the nucleus of the 1st S.C. Volunteers (Colored) in 1862. Robert Smalls (1839-1915), Civil War hero, state legislator, militia general, and U.S. Congressman, was a post officer. The post hosted annual Decoration Day services at Beaufort National Cemetery and the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War continue that tradition.

Sponsored by the Beaufort County Historical Society, 2013

Cherry Hill School, Hilton Head Island NR

The Cherry Hill School, built ca. 1937, is significant as a building associated with the development of African-American education during segregation in South Carolina. The school operated until all African-American children attended the new consolidated elementary school in 1954. The community

that organized, purchased the property, built, helped maintain, and attended the school was comprised of the descendants of the former-slave town of Mitchelville, the first community to mandate education in the South. At the time of construction of the Cherry Hill School, the island was still an isolated, largely undeveloped, unincorporated portion of Beaufort County. The Cherry Hill School is the first and only freestanding, purpose-built schoolhouse for African-American children on Hilton Head Island. When the Cherry Hill School was built, there were three other black elementary schools in privately owned buildings serving the various black neighborhoods on Hilton Head Island. However, none met in buildings specifically built as schools. The Cherry Hill School had the smallest enrollment of the black elementary schools on the island. The number of children enrolled specifically in the Cherry Hill School numbered from 27-32, with one teacher. The building is a simple, gable-front rectangular one-room frame and weatherboard-sided schoolhouse on an open brick-pier foundation. The interior remains much as it did when the building opened. While the building was a public elementary school from 1937 to 1954 it was owned by the Beaufort County School District. The St. James Baptist Church purchased the school in 1956. The church extended and renovated the building in 1984.

<http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/beaufort/S10817707071/index.htm>

CHERRY HILL SCHOOL HM

210 Dillon Rd., Hilton Head Island

(Front) This one-room frame school, built ca. 1937, was the first separate school building constructed for African-American students on Hilton Head Island. It replaced an earlier Cherry Hill School, which had held its classes in the parsonage of St. James Baptist Church. After the black community on the island raised funds to buy this tract, Beaufort County agreed to build this school.

(Reverse) This was an elementary school with one teacher, with an average of about 30 students. It had grades 1-5 when it opened in 1937, adding grade 6 the next school year. The black community helped pay for maintenance of the school and also supplemented teacher salaries. Cherry Hill School was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2012.

Sponsored by St. James Baptist Church, 2013

Charleston County

CIGAR FACTORY HM

701 E. Bay St., Charleston

(Front) This five-story commercial building, built ca. 1882 as a textile mill, was known as the Charleston Manufacturing Company, then Charleston Cotton Mills, in its early years. Leased to the American Tobacco Company in 1903, the plant was sold to that company in 1912. Popularly called "the Cigar Factory," it produced cigars such as Cremo and Roi-Tan until it closed in 1973. The Cigar Factory was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

(Reverse)

"WE SHALL OVERCOME"

By the end of World War II the factory employed 1,400 workers, 900 of them black women. In October 1945, 1,200 workers walked out over discrimination and low wages. Strikers sang the gospel hymn "I'll Overcome Someday." Later revised as "We Shall Overcome," it would become the anthem of the Civil Rights Movement. The strike ended in March 1946 with a settlement giving workers raises and promising better treatment.

Sponsored by the Preservation Society of Charleston, 2013

JAMES SIMONS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HM

741 King St., Charleston

(Front) This school, built in 1919 and designed by local architects Benson & Barbot, was the fifth public elementary school in the city. It opened for the 1919-1920 school year with an enrollment of 600. In 1955 the Charleston Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) petitioned the Charleston school board to desegregate all public city schools, including this one.

(Reverse)

DESEGREGATION OF CHARLESTON SCHOOLS

In 1960 nine parents, with support from the NAACP, applied for their children's transfer to four white schools, including James Simons Elementary School. Denied by the board and on appeal, they sued in federal court in 1962 and won their case the next year. On September 3, 1963, eleven black students entered this school and Memminger Elementary School and Charleston and Rivers High Schools.

Sponsored by the Preservation Society of Charleston, 2013

KRESS BUILDING HM

281 King St., Charleston

(Front) This three-story Art Deco building, built in 1930-31 was a 5- and 10-cent store owned by S.H. Kress & Co. until 1980. Kress, with about 400 American stores, designed its own buildings. This store features a yellow brick facade with colorful and decorative glazed terracotta details typical of Kress's Art Deco designs. A 1941 two-story addition faces Wentworth Street. McCrory Stores bought this building in 1980, operating it under the Kress name until 1992.

(Reverse)

CIVIL RIGHTS SIT-INS

On April 1, 1960, the lunch counter here and those at the Woolworth's and W.T. Grant's stores on King St. were the targets of the city's first civil rights "sit-in." Black students from Burke High School were denied service but refused to leave. Arrested for trespassing, they were later convicted and fined. This youth-led protest was the beginning of a broader civil rights movement in Charleston.

Sponsored by the Preservation Society of Charleston, 2013

HOSPITAL STRIKE OF 1969 HM

Ashley Ave., Charleston

(Front) Civil rights marches on Ashley Ave. and elsewhere occurred during strikes at two hospitals from March 20 to July 18, 1969. Workers, mostly black women, cited unequal treatment and pay when they organized and walked out of the Medical College Hospital (MCH) on Doughty St. and Charleston County Hospital (CCH) on Calhoun St. Some picketers were arrested, the state of S.C. refused to sanction a union, and talks stalled.

(Reverse) The Southern Christian Leadership Conference joined the strike in its first major campaign since the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. Protests were marred by violence, and Gov. Robert McNair called out the National Guard and set a curfew. In May King's widow Coretta Scott King led 5,000 marchers down Ashley Ave. A settlement at MCH in June and CCH in July gave workers raises and promised better treatment.

Sponsored by the Preservation Society of Charleston, 2013

THE PROGRESSIVE CLUB HM

River Rd. & Royal Oak Dr., Johns Island

(Front) The Progressive Club, built in 1962-63, was a store and community center for Johns Island and other Sea Islands until it was badly damaged by Hurricane Hugo in 1989. The club had been founded in 1948 by civil rights activist Esau Jenkins (1910-1972), who worked to improve educational, political, economic, and other opportunities for blacks on the island and in the lowcountry.

(Reverse) Jenkins, Septima Clark (1898-1987), and Bernice Robinson (1914-1994) founded the first Citizenship School in 1957 to encourage literacy and voter registration. Its success led to many similar schools across the South, called "the base on which the whole civil rights movement was built." The Progressive Club was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2007.

Sponsored by the Preservation Society of Charleston, 2013

JONATHAN JASPER WRIGHT LAW OFFICE HM

84 Queen St., Charleston

(Front) Jonathan Jasper Wright (1840-1885), the first African American in the U.S. to sit as a justice on a state supreme court, practiced law here from 1877 until his death in 1885. Wright, a native of Pa., was educated at Lancasterian Academy in Ithaca, N.Y. He came to S.C. in 1865 as a teacher for the American Missionary Association and was later a legal advisor to freedmen for the Freedmen's Bureau.

(Reverse) Wright wrote that he hoped to "vindicate the cause of the downtrodden." He was a delegate to the S.C. constitutional convention of 1868 and a state senator 1868-70. Wright, elected to the S.C. Supreme Court in 1870, resigned in 1877 due to political pressure. After he left the bench he practiced law, helped Claflin College found its Law Department, and became its Chair in Law. He died of tuberculosis in 1885.

Sponsored by the S.C. Black Lawyers Association, 2013

Darlington County

HARTSVILLE GRADED SCHOOL HM

630 South 6th St., Hartsville

(Front) The first public school for the black children of Hartsville and vicinity operated on this site from about 1900 to 1921. It was renamed Darlington County Training School in 1918. A new school was built on 6th St. south of this site in 1921. Rev. Henry H. Butler (1887-1948) was principal at both sites for a combined 37 years. The 1921 school was renamed Butler School in Butler's honor in 1939.

MT. PISGAH NURSERY SCHOOL

(Reverse) Mt. Pisgah Presbyterian Church grew out of a Sunday school started on this site by Rev. T.J. James in 1922. The church was organized that same year, and a new church building was erected nearby in 1926. Rev. James also founded Mt. Pisgah Nursery School, which operated in the old graded school here for many years. Rev. James's family later donated this property to the city for Pride Park, established in 1986.

Sponsored by the South Carolina African American Heritage Commission, 2012

NEW HOPEWELL BAPTIST CHURCH HM

3500 New Hopewell Rd., Hartsville vicinity

(Front) This church was formally organized soon after the Civil War. It was founded by 20 black members of Antioch Baptist Church, who received letters of dismissal to form their own congregation in 1869. Slaves and free blacks had belonged to Antioch Baptist Church since its organization in 1830.

(Reverse) This church held its first services in a brush arbor. In 1871 Mrs. Lottie Cosom donated an acre on this site, later expanded to four acres for the church and cemetery. New Hopewell built its first permanent church here in 1886, renovated in 1887 and 1917-18. The present sanctuary was built in 1962.

Sponsored by the Darlington County Historical Commission, 2013

Florence County

JOSHUA BRAVEBOY PLANTATION HM

Ron E. McNair Blvd. (U.S. Hwy. 52) at the Lynches Lake Bridge, Lake City

This site was part of the 150-acre plantation of Joshua Braveboy (1740-fl. 1820), a free black who served in the S.C. militia during the American Revolution. Braveboy, a native of N.C., came to S.C. in 1771 and received a grant on Two Mile Branch at Lynches Creek. He served under Gen. Francis Marion in 1780-81, and in another militia unit in 1782. He spent the rest of his life here, in what was then Williamsburg Co.

Sponsored by the Florence County Historical Commission, 2013

THE LYNCHING OF FRAZIER BAKER HM

corner of Deep River St. and Church St., Lake City

(Front) In 1898 a building here was the scene of a lynching that sparked outrage across the nation. Frazier Baker, an African American who had recently been appointed postmaster of Effingham, was appointed postmaster of Lake City in 1897. Whites who resented Baker harassed him, even burning the post office in an attempt to make him resign and leave town. An old school on this site became a temporary post office and Baker's home.

(Reverse) On the night of Feb. 21-22, 1898, a mob set the house on fire and shot Baker and his family when they ran out. Baker and a baby daughter were killed, his wife and three of their children were wounded, and an editorial called it "the most horrible crime ever committed" in S.C. Local and state officials did nothing. Eleven men were tried in federal court in 1899, but a hung jury resulted in a mistrial.

Sponsored by the Town of Lake City, 2013

Greenville County

OLD PILGRIM BAPTIST CHURCH HM

3540 Woodruff Rd., Simpsonville

(Front) This church was founded in 1868 by black members of nearby Clear Spring Baptist Church who named their new church Pilgrim Baptist Church. Rev. John Abraham, their first pastor, held services in a brush arbor until a log church was built here. It was renamed Old Pilgrim Baptist Church in 1894. A frame church built here in 1907 was covered in brick veneer in 1962. The present brick church was built in 1983.

(Reverse)

OLD PILGRIM ROSENWALD SCHOOL

Old Pilgrim Rosenwald School, named for the church, was built in 1930. It was one of almost 500 schools in S.C. funded in part by the Julius Rosenwald Foundation from 1917 to 1932. Built at a cost of \$3,800 with local funds raised by Henry Locke and trustees of Old Pilgrim Baptist Church, it operated 1930-1954 with three teachers, teaching as many as 83 elementary school students in grades 1-7.

Sponsored by Old Pilgrim Baptist Church, 2013

SPRINGFIELD BAPTIST CHURCH HM

600 E. McBee Ave., Greenville

(Front) This is the oldest black Baptist congregation in downtown Greenville. It was founded in 1867 by members of Greenville Baptist Church (now First Baptist Church), which had been a combined congregation of whites and blacks before the Civil War. Rev. Gabriel Poole, known as “Father Poole,” was its first pastor. The new church worshipped in First Baptist Church until it built its own church here in 1872.

(Reverse) The congregation purchased this site from the estate of Vardry McBee in 1871 and completed its first church, a frame building later covered in brick veneer, in 1872. That church was replaced by a brick Gothic Revival church in 1959. Springfield Baptist Church hosted many significant meetings during the Civil Rights Movement. The 1959 church burned in 1972 and was replaced by the present church in 1976.

Sponsored by the Congregation, 2013

Laurens County

BELL STREET SCHOOL HM

301 N. Bell St., Clinton

(Front) This school, built in 1950, was the third African-American school on Bell Street. Friendship School, founded in 1883 by nearby Friendship A.M.E. Church, was a combined elementary and high school. The frame school was replaced in 1926 by a brick school, named Bell Street School, with students in grades 1-11 until grade 12 was added in 1948-49. In 1937 it became the first black high school in Laurens County to be fully accredited by the state.

(Reverse)

MARTHA DENDY SCHOOL

Bell Street School burned in 1949, and this school opened in 1950. It became Bell Street Elementary in 1956 when a new high school was built. In 1960 it was renamed Martha Dendy Elementary School in memory of principal David Dendy’s mother. It became a junior high school when county schools desegregated in 1970, then a middle school in 1972, and a 6th grade center in 1997. The school closed in 2008.

Sponsored by the City of Clinton and Concerned Citizens for the Preservation of Bell Street / Martha Dendy School, 2012

Marlboro County

“THE GULF” HM

Bennetttsville

(Front) This area has been the center of the African-American business district and a popular gathering place since the late 19th century. It has been called “the Gulf” since about 1925. Its most prominent early figure was E.J. Sawyer, Jr. (1854-1929), who was born a slave in N.C. and came here about 1869. Sawyer, postmaster 1883-85 and 1892-93, was also principal of the Colored Graded School 1878-1893, and editor of the *Pee Dee Educator* 1890-1900.

(Reverse) The block of Market St. going W from Liberty St. to Cheraw St. got its name from the large Gulf Oil Company sign at Everybody’s Service Station. That station, on the corner of N. Liberty and W. Market Sts., was long owned by J.D. “Bud” McLeod. Heber E. Covington (1887-1952) ran a

popular cafe next door for many years, as well as a taxi service. The street was often blocked off at night on the weekends for dancers enjoying the latest recorded or live music.

Sponsored by the Marlborough Historical Society, 2012

35-39

MARLBORO TRAINING HIGH SCHOOL HM

Bennettsville

(Front) This school, built in 1928 and founded by the Marlboro Educational Society, was the first high school for black students in the county. It was accredited by the state as a four-year high school by 1939. An elementary and high school 1928-1956, it included students in grades 1-11 until 1948 and added grade 12 in 1949. It was an elementary school 1956-1972, then was a child development center for the school district until 1987.

(Reverse) The Colonial Revival school was designed by Bennettsville architect Henry Dudley Harrall (1878-1959). It was also called Marlboro County Training High School. Charles D. Wright, Sr., principal here from 1929 to his death in 1949, was its longest-serving principal, responsible for many advances in its curriculum. This building has housed a local non-profit community center since 1988.

Sponsored by the Marlborough Historical Society, 2012

Oconee County

Faith Cabin Library at Seneca Junior College, Seneca NR

The Faith Cabin Library at Seneca Junior College is significant for its role in African American education and social history in South Carolina between 1937 and 1939. This building, constructed in 1937 and known as the Oberlin Unit because it was largely the result of the interest and efforts of students at Oberlin College in Ohio, is important on a local level for its impact on the African American community in Oconee County, and on the state level as one of only two remaining free-standing Faith Cabin Libraries extant of the thirty built in South Carolina between 1932 and 1943. The Faith Cabin Library at Seneca Junior College was a part of the larger Faith Cabin Library program created by Willie Lee Buffington, a white mill worker who later became a Methodist minister and college professor, that offered library services to rural African Americans in South Carolina. The segregation laws of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century barred African Americans from using other library facilities beyond what was offered in Columbia and Charleston. The black community in Seneca was one of the thirty communities fortunate to participate in the Faith Cabin Library program. With donated money and timber from the community, and books from the students of Oberlin College, Buffington established the library, a free-standing two-room log cabin, on the campus of Seneca Junior College. When the Faith Cabin Library program began, the faculty of the college contacted Buffington to build a library on the campus. The library remained open for only two years, when in 1939 Seneca Junior College closed its doors due in part to the construction of a new black high school nearby and the economic impact of the Great Depression. It is the only building remaining from the Seneca Junior College campus.

<http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/oconee/S10817737020/index.htm>

Orangeburg County

BUSHY POND BAPTIST CHURCH HM

1396 Wire Rd., Norway

(Front) This church was organized during or just after the Civil War by black members of Willow Swamp Baptist Church, a combined congregation of whites and blacks before the war. In 1869-70

members received formal letters of dismissal to organize their own church. They named it Bushy Pond for the bush arbor they built nearby for their first services, and the pond close to it. (Reverse) Rev. John Fitzsimmons was the first pastor. By 1871 Bushy Pond Baptist Church had 103 members. In 1905, during the pastorate of Rev. W.O. Carmichael, the congregation built its first permanent church, a frame Gothic Revival sanctuary, on this site. The church also sponsored the Bushy Pond School, built nearby. The present brick church was dedicated in 1974.
Sponsored by the Congregation, 2013

ROCKY SWAMP ROSENWALD SCHOOL HM

Norway Rd. (S.C. Sec. Rd. 38-36), E of Levi Pond Rd., Neeses vicinity
(Front) This is the site of Rocky Swamp Rosenwald School, a frame three-room school built here in 1920-21 for African-American students in Neeses and vicinity. An elementary school with two to three teachers in grades 1-9, it was one of more than 500 schools in S.C. funded in part by the Julius Rosenwald Foundation.
(Reverse) This school was built at a total cost of \$4,100, with contributions from the black community, the white community, Orangeburg County, and the Rosenwald Fund. It opened for the 1921-22 school year with 199 students, averaging 145 students until 1942. Rocky Swamp closed after the 1950-51 school year.
Sponsored by the Rocky Swamp Rosenwald School Historical Marker Committee and the Orangeburg Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, 2013

Richland County

ZION CHAPEL BAPTIST CHURCH NO. 1 HM

130 Walter Hills Rd., Columbia
(Front) This African-American church was organized ca. 1865 when four men left Sandy Level Baptist Church, founded before the Revolution with both white and black members, to form their own congregation. They elected Rev. Joe Taylor as their first pastor and held early services in a brush arbor nearby.
(Reverse) The first permanent church here, a log building, was replaced by a frame church 1907-1922, during the pastorate of Rev. T.H. McNeal. It was covered in brick veneer in 1941, then extensively renovated 1964-1978, during the pastorate of Rev. A.J. Grove, Sr. The historic church cemetery dates to the 1880s.
Sponsored by the Richland County Conservation Commission and the Congregation, 2013